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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

7 September 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Bruce C. Clarke, Jr.  
Deputy Director, National Foreign Assessment

FROM : [REDACTED]  
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

SUBJECT : An Update on Soviet Brigade Business

1. At the Interagency Brigade Meeting last night Aaron requested that the NSC be informed of all requests for briefings or reports by Legislative Committees and all our acceptances of such requests. I advised him that a raft of requests had been received. He indicated that he would recommend that the President ask Senator Byrd to prevail upon various Committees to relent and slow down the pace of requests since each hearing tended to produce new disclosures by Senators and undesirable disruptions in the planning process.

2. Aaron's request for a limited dissemination of the upcoming Memorandum to Holders on the Soviet Brigade is dealt with in my accompanying memorandum.

3. As I indicated to you briefly after the Cutler Breakfast, the Working Group considered three options:

Outlines of these three options were to be presented to the President for his use in the Friday morning breakfast at which time guidelines for Vance's talking points to Dobrynin were to be discussed.

4. Last night, I provided a hastily composed draft of replies to queries by the Group prepared by [REDACTED] OSR regarding those

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attributes or activities of the Soviet Brigade in Cuba that made it appear to be a combat ground force unit (as opposed say to a MAAG advisory unit) (attached at Tab A). I also provided an update of our earlier paper on the status of construction at Cienfuegos, prepared by General Gorman, together with copies of the Cienfuegos paper (attached at Tab B). This evening I will be providing some preliminary judgments on the ability of intelligence to monitor changes in the structures, organization, installations, equipment, and activities of the Brigade such as might occur if it were being transformed to a non-combat status. As I told you, the Group appears to be growing more skeptical about this second option approach, and my guess is that the brief preliminary monitoring assessment that Huffstetler will have prepared for this evening's meeting is unlikely to provide much encouragement for the second option.

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6. In response to your request for an evaluation of today's FBI report alleging the existence of a "secret Soviet missile base":

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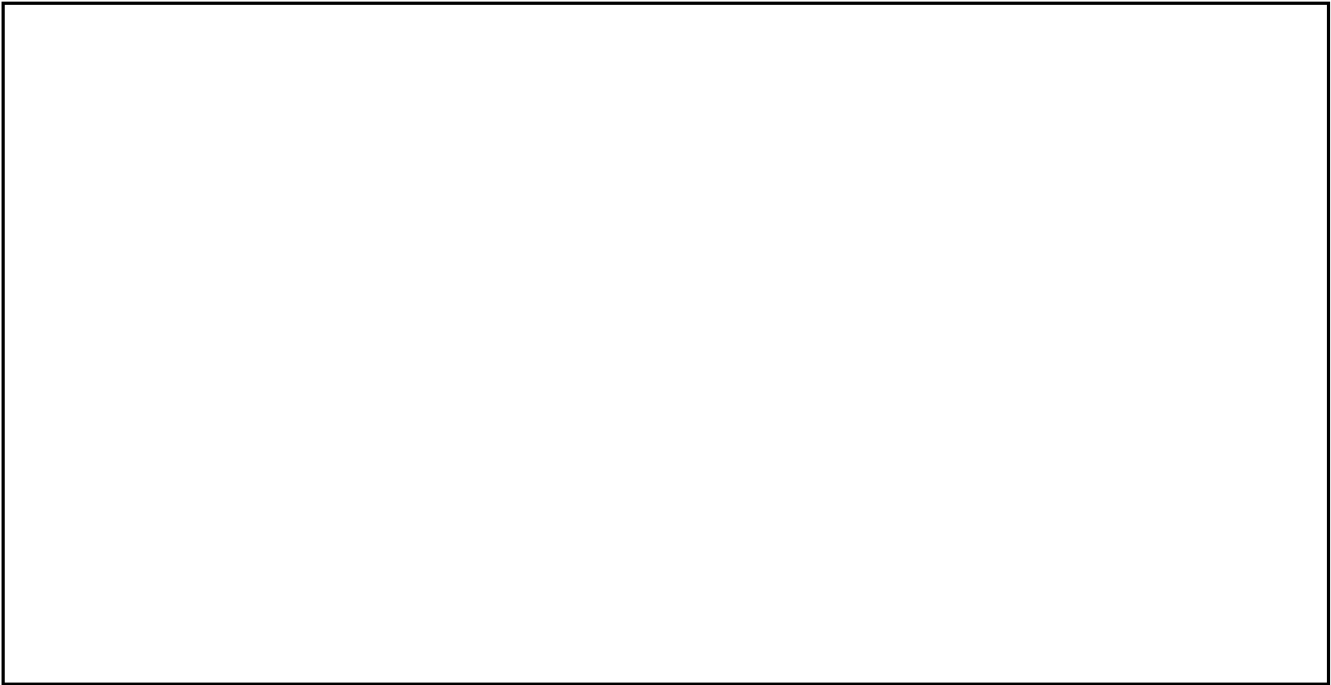
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All paragraphs of this Memo  
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Attachments:

NFAC #4742-79, dtd 7Sept79

Tab A - Draft of Replies to Queries by Group

Tab B - Cienfuegos

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What are the brigade's combat capabilities?

Structured as it is with organic armor, infantry, artillery and antitank capabilities, and what appears to be a complete complement of support units, the brigade is capable of a wide variety of offensive and defensive missions depending on the opposition and the location. Like the vast majority of Soviet ground forces units, it has no organizational helicopter, airlift, or long-range amphibious capabilities. The multiple rocket launcher <sup>(and increased antitank strength)</sup> ~~battalion~~ gives the brigade combat capabilities slightly greater than those of a <sup>Standard</sup> Soviet motorized rifle regiment. There are three such regiments plus a tank regiment and considerable division-level support in each Soviet motorized rifle division. Such divisions have about the same number of major combat items as a US mechanized division, but about two-thirds as many men and a more austere support structure.

On Island: Relative to the Cuban Army, the Soviet brigade appears to add little in purely military terms to Castro's military strength in Cuba. The Cubans have some 100,000 ground forces personnel on the island. Probably to simplify logistics, the Soviet units are equipped with the same type of combat equipment as is found in the Cuban Army so the Soviet presence does not add anything in ~~of combat~~ terms of increased technical effectiveness beyond its <sup>(In every of an uprising, the Soviet brigade)</sup> small size. ~~Its~~ relative combat capabilities and isolated

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position would not enable it to successfully engage any substantial portion of the Cuban army. The brigade does, however, have heavy firepower and could defend a portion of the coast against amphibious assault--we have seen such a role in one exercise--or overrun the US base at Guantanamo. The Cubans appear to have more than adequate forces for these missions, however.

Off Island: The brigade has no organic capability for airlift or open water amphibious assault missions. Nor is it specifically equipped for such missions even if the air or sea transport were provided. Most of the combat equipment is too heavy or too large to be carried by any helicopters or transport aircraft in Cuba. Much of the equipment is amphibious for calm water crossings such as rivers, and the BTR-60PB armored personnel carriers could be used for amphibious assaults from landing ships across a beach. Without its own lift capabilities, the brigade does not have capabilities beyond those of the Cuban Army for such operations and, again, the Cubans appear to have more than adequate ground forces for these missions.

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